

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-7 and 9-21 are currently pending. Claims 1, 3-4, 7, 10, 11, and 16-18 are currently amended. Claim 8 is canceled. Claims 19-21 are added by the present amendment. The changes and additions to the claims do not add new matter and are supported by the originally filed specification.

In the outstanding Office Action, the Specification was objected to; Claims 7 and 10-12 were objected to; Claims 1-5, 10, and 15-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Tomita et al. (U.S. Pub. No. 2002/0031363, hereafter "Tomita") in view of Kawabata (JP 61-205968); Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Tomita in view of Kawabata and Limura et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,284,424, hereafter "Limura"); Claims 6, 7, and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Tomita in view of Kawabata and Honma et al. (US Patent No. 5,214,478, hereafter "Honma"); Claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Tomita in view of Kawabata and Finn et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,733,943, hereafter "Finn"); and Claims 8, 11, 13, and 14 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the courtesy of an interview extended to Applicants' representatives on February 16, 2007. During the interview, the differences between the claims and the applied art were discussed. Further, clarifying claim amendments, similar to those presented herewith were also discussed. In addition, the Examiner indicated that new Claims 19 and 20 appear to overcome the applied art. The arguments presented during the interview are reiterated below.

In view of the objection to the Specification, the title has been amended to be more descriptive. No new matter has been added. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested this objection be withdrawn.

In view of the claim objections, Claims 7, 10, and 11 have been amended as suggested by the outstanding Office Action. No new matter has been added. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested these objections be withdrawn.

In view of the rejection of Claims 1-7, 9-10, 12, and 15-18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as discussed above, independent Claims 1 and 18 have been amended to recite a charging unit that applies an AC voltage to a pressure belt. No new matter has been added. Support for this feature can be found in the Specification on page 9, line 21 to page 10, line 9, and Fig. 3.

Briefly recapitulating, amended Claim 1 is directed to a fixing device in an image forming apparatus, including, inter alia, a pressure belt that holds a recording medium by electrostatic force and carries the recording medium, and a charging unit that applies an AC voltage to the pressure belt. Claim 18 is amended similarly to Claim 1.

In a non-limiting example, Fig. 2 shows a fixing device having the pressure belt 15 and the charging unit 19. Fig. 3 shows that the charging unit 19 applies an AC voltage to the pressure belt 15.

Turning to the applied art, Tomita shows in Fig. 2 an apparatus having a pressure belt 14, a recording medium P, and a fixing belt 13. However, as the Office Action indicated, Tomita does not disclose that the pressure belt holds the recording medium by electrostatic force.

To cure this deficiency, the outstanding Office Action relies on Kawabata to disclose a fixing device with a pressure belt that holds a recording medium by electrostatic force. In Fig. 1, Kawabata discloses a pressure roller 15 and a charging unit 16a that provides only a negative charge on the pressure roller 15 to hold a recording medium 5 by electrostatic force.

However, as discussed during the interview, Kawabata fails to teach or suggest a charging unit that applies an AC voltage to a pressure belt as required by amended Claims 1 and 18.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1 and 18 and each of the claims depending therefrom patentably distinguish over Tomita and Kawabata, either alone or in combination.

Limura, Honma, and Finn have been considered but fail to remedy the deficiencies of Tomita and Kawabata as discussed above in regards to Claims 1 and 18.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection to Claims 1-7, 9-10, 12, and 15-18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) be withdrawn and that Claims 1-7 and 9-18 be allowed.

Claim 19 has been added to recite the features of original Claims 1, 10, and 11, and Claims 20 and 21 have been added to recite the features of original Claims 1 and 13. No new matter has been added. Because the features of Claims 11 and 13 were allowable, it is believed that new Claims 19-21 are also allowable.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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